Keeping Kids Safe Online

tips + tools for parents

THE INTERNET

The internet poses challenges for parents because, unlike TV or radio, the internet:

- is interactive – your child can interact with anyone online

- allows users to post information that is inaccurate, misleading or inappropriate for children

- provides no restrictions on advertising to children

- may not be anonymous even when it seems to be

  Besides, your child probably knows more about the internet than you do!

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

LEARN ABOUT THE INTERNET and how to protect your child:

- LOOK for books about child safety on the internet

- VISIT educational websites (search for "child safety on the internet")

- BE AWARE that social networking sites for kids, like MySpace, are open to everyone, including adults

- FIND OUT if your child has a webpage

GET INVOLVED. Spend time online with your child. Your involvement in your child's life is the best insurance of your child's safety.

STAY INFORMED. Keep up-to-date on parental controls and what they can do.

BECOME AN ADVOCATE for your kids. If you see something you don't like, contact your internet service provider (ISP) or the company that created the material.

SET RULES ABOUT INTERNET USE. Keep computers in a family area so you can monitor your child's activity.

LEARN THE BASICS of computer security. Visit office supply or computer software stores for information about firewall programs and other security software.

You and your child should be aware of "phishing," where criminals use email — for example, a fake security notice from a bank — or instant messaging to "phish" for personal information and financial data to commit crimes like identity theft — the fastest growing internet crime.

NEVER give out your Social Security number, the number one target of identity thieves.

BROWSING

Exploring information on
world-wide computer networks
has benefits and risks for kids.

BENEFITS TO YOUR CHILD

- ACCESS educational resources
- OBTAIN current information
- STAY TUNED in to school websites
- PLAY fun and educational games
- LEARN skills useful in future jobs

DANGERS AND RISKS

- easy-to-find sites with sexually
  explicit images
- sites promoting hatred, bigotry,
  violence, drugs and cults
- inaccurate, misleading and untrue
  information
- unrestricted marketing of alcohol
  and tobacco
- marketing that deceptively collects
  personal information to make contact
  or sell products
- easy access to games with
  excessive violence

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- LOOK for software that can block or filter inappropriate sites
- TEACH your child to end any online experience if uncomfortable or scared by clicking on the "back" button, logging off and telling a trusted adult as soon as possible
- TEACH your child never to give out personal information without your permission

WHAT PARENTAL CONTROLS CAN DO

- BLOCK access to inappropriate materials
- ALLOW you to specify what is appropriate
- MONITOR your child's activity by recording web addresses that he or she visits
- LET YOU SET access levels for each family member
- LIMIT search results to appropriate content for kids
- ENFORCE time limits set by parents

CHATTING

Chatting online is a popular pastime, but kids should be reminded that the same rules about talking to strangers in person apply online.

BENEFITS TO YOUR CHILD

- TALK to kids with similar interests and concerns in rooms specifically for kids
- COMMUNICATE with family, friends, teachers, etc.
- IMPROVE typing and written communication skills

DANGERS AND RISKS

- chatting is the most likely online activity through which children will encounter predators who want to harm them
- offensive language and adult conversation
- too much time online limits a child's well-rounded development by taking the place of friends, schoolwork, sports and other activities

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- ACCOMPANY your child in chat rooms
- TEACH your child not to give out or post his or her name, address, Social Security number, school, photograph or anything else that identifies them
- EXPLAIN that people are not always who they claim
- NEVER ALLOW your child to arrange an in-person meeting without you there
- TELL YOUR KIDS to notify you immediately if someone asks for a photograph or to meet them in person
- LIMIT your child to specific chat rooms or consider blocking chat entirely

WHAT PARENTAL CONTROLS CAN DO

- ALLOW access only to monitored chat rooms, or block access to all
- BLOCK private messages between a child and another user
- LIMIT a child's ability to give out personal information

RESOURCES

- **US Department of Justice**
  WWW.CYBERCRIME.GOV/RULES/RULES.HTM

- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**
  WWW.FBI.GOV / BECRIMESMART.HTM

- **Federal Trade Commission**
  WWW.FTC.GOV/KIDZPRIVACY

- **California Department of Justice**
  WWW.SAFESTATE.ORG

- **National Cyber Security Alliance**
  WWW.STAYSAFEONLINE.INFO

- **National Center for Missing
  and Exploited Children**
  WWW.NCMEC.ORG and WWW.NETSMARTZ.ORG

- **The Internet Keep Safe Coalition**
  WWW.IKEEPSAFE.ORG

- **National Crime Prevention Council**
  WWW.NCPC.ORG

- **The Children's Partnership**
  "A Parent's Guide to Online Kids"
  WWW.CHILDRENSPARTNERSHIP.ORG

- **National Parent Teacher Association**
  "Internet Safety"
  WWW.PTA.ORG

- **i-Safe America**
  WWW.ISAFE.ORG

California State Senate
SENATOR JEFF DENHAM
TWELFTH SENATE DISTRICT

DEAR FRIEND:

The internet needs your attention. An increasing number of kids are on the internet, emailing or instant messaging their friends, downloading music, playing interactive games, visiting social networking sites, or doing homework. This is happening at school, at home, or – with internet-capable cell phones – anywhere at all.

The internet has opened up a whole new world for your child. It's a wonderful tool for education and entertainment and it offers children experiences that are educational and rewarding. Being able to use the internet effectively can increase your child's school performance and future job potential.

However, the internet also brings with it a host of potential dangers, and can present unsafe situations for kids. Just as you would not allow your child to wander alone into unknown territory, you also would not want him or her to interact online without parental guidance and supervision. Take steps to educate yourself about the internet and what it can mean for your child, good and bad.

The California Legislature is addressing the issue of internet safety for kids. Recent legislation restricts contact with minors through the internet, makes internet safety information and resources available to public school students and strengthens penalties for inappropriate contact with minors.

This brochure provides some useful tips and resources to help you keep your child safe online.

SENATOR JEFF DENHAM

COMPLIMENTS OF
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